Industry & Idleness:

A MORAL CONTRAST.

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BY THE

Author of a Memoir of B. Bolingbroke Woodward, B.A., F.S.A., &c., late Librarian to the Queen.

ETON: WILLIAMS & SON.

1877.

ETON COLLEGE PRESS: WILLIAMS AND SON

TO

HENRY BROWN,

Son of my late Friend,

THIS LITTLE BOOK IS AFFECTIONATELY

Inscribed.

THE LAURELS, CLEWER HILL,
WINDSOR, 1876.

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TO THE READER.

WHILE the Press in the present day teems with publications for the amusement and benefit of the middle classes, there appears to be an opening for works of interesting character for youths of the *higher ranks*. It is, therefore, proposed to issue a series of Tales, uniform with this, embracing such facts and experience as may occur to the minds of the authors engaged in the undertaking.

INTRODUCTION.

THE following little Tale, founded on fact, was composed during the short intervals of rest which the pressure of inevitable engagements admits of, and had, therefore, many disadvantages to struggle with.

My only aim in writing it was the improvement of youth. If I have succeeded in re-calling one stray wanderer from the path of error, I shall deem my labour amply rewarded; if I entirely fail, the consciousness of having *intended well* must, at least, still be left me.

INDUSTRY AND IDLENESS:

A MORAL CONTRAST.

IN a retired part of the country resided two gentlemen of moderate yet independent fortune,—too small to suffer them to launch into luxury and extravagance, but sufficient not only to protect them from the pangs and snares of poverty, but also to supply them with all the comforts and many of the real delicacies of a country life; such as a library well filled with the works of those authors whose reputation has been established by the test of time, and those productions of modern talent which are not debased by a continued strain of sophistry, deism, and immorality, falsely termed wit, philosophy, and reasoning, but whose amiable authors, in a licentious age, have boldly stood forth the undaunted

champions of Christianity and virtue; with some of those highly-finished prints which are dignified, not degraded, by their subject, and which, in delicacy of design and correctness of subject, emulate painting, their parent art; and occasionally an original from the pencil of some of our great modern artists, whose value was enhanced by their possessing sufficient taste to discern that when the lapse of ages shall have removed them beyond the rancour of envy, the names of Maclise and Landseer shall stand as high on the record of fame as Rubens and Raffaelle: a house economically but elegantly furnished and which displayed in its arrangement convenience rather than splendour; a small *demesne* artistically laid out and carefully cultivated, containing a due proportion of wood and water, lawn and garden.

The similarity and innocence of their pursuits and amusements made them unceasing friends and constant companions; for though guilt may enter into an occasional coalition

for mutual defence, or the selfish advancement of some nefarious purpose, yet unbinding is the cement and short must be the duration of that union which is not founded on the firm basis of honesty and virtue.

In fine weather their favourite occupation was the practical part of botany, and their time was spent in examining and assisting the progressive advancement of the various plants and flowers which beautified their green-houses or adorned their gardens, and in tracing the various changes which a plant undergoes from its torpid state, in a little seed or bulbous root, before the animating influence of a genial soil has furnished it with the vigour of vegetable life, till it returns through the intermediate degrees of refreshing verdure, and the many-tinted flower to its original and primary condition. Who that is endowed with reasoning faculties can fail to acknowledge and adore the great dispensing Power who has displayed such admirable, such infinite, wisdom in the formation of the smallest

fibre, in the flow of the tender juices, and in the delicate economy of every part which constitutes the minutest member of this the least and lowest branch of his wide and wonderful creation? When inclement weather rendered out-door amusements impossible or unpleasant, books or conversation were an unfailing resource; they possessed within themselves an extensive fund of information, which every day became richer by their endeavour to enlarge it: on this they could at any time draw without fear of refusal, and therefore their tempers and their spirits were placed above the varying control of climate.

They had each an only son, of the same age within a very few months. While these were yet children, contact compelled them to commence a friendship which, as they ripened into manhood, esteem strengthened and choice confirmed: yet their dispositions and mental powers were widely different, strongly contrasted, and constituted a striking instance of

the inutility of the brightest talent without some portion of application.

EUPHRONIUS possessed but very moderate abilities, though he was far from being what may be considered actually dull. He wanted that quickness which sometimes catches the surface at a single glance, but what he had once acquired he never lost: in pursuing his studies he proceeded by slow and deliberate investigation, and never advanced to a fresh subject till he was thoroughly acquainted with the deepest meaning of, and the remotest allusion to, that in which he had been previously engaged. Thus, though his progress was slow, yet it was certain; he could, at any time, contemplate the ground which he had gone over, and reflect that so far, at least, he had done all that industry and application could effect.

The following was the last English Exercise of EUPHRONIUS before quitting home for the University:—

ON EMIGRATION.

Emigration is the natural and, where it is possible, the inevitable result of too crowded a state of society. When a hive of bees is too full, some of them come forth, form a separate *swarm* and emigrate. In the common order of things, when the members of a family grow up and feel that they require larger and more independent accommodation than can be obtained under the parental roof, they remove, marry, settle elsewhere, and each becomes the head of a separate establishment. The same fact follows when the inhabitants of a country become too numerous to live comfortably together. When a difficulty is experienced in finding employment and food for the members of the community; when every occupation, whether manual, mechanical, or intellectual, is over-stocked; when competition is so extensive that employment cannot be obtained even by the industrious; when, in consequence of this competition, labour obtains so small a remuneration that

it proves insufficient to supply necessary food, much less secure it; and he who exerts his energies for the benefit of another for that increase of comfort and that hope of eventual independence to which he feels that his toil entitles him: when society reaches this point, it is soon ascertained that some remedy must be sought, and all thinking individuals of rightly constituted minds will be desirous to strike out and to suggest one which shall be peaceable in its carrying out and profitable in its conclusion.

If the evil of over-population is left to take its course or to rectify itself, a frightful future is opened up to the eye of humanity and kindness.

Population may be thinned by pestilence, famine, civil or external war. Any other causes may reduce the superfluity, but they may at the same time reduce it too much and leave the scanty remnant so demoralized and dispirited that they have neither union nor energy to repair the shattered fabric of society.

The contemplation of such a calamity makes every feeling heart sink and sicken, stimulating every enquiring mind and philanthropic spirit to discover and to divulge a better and more blessed remedy. Notwithstanding this gloomy view that might be taken of the case, over-population is the means which an All Wise inscrutable Providence has almost invariably employed for spreading mankind over the earth and perhaps for finally filling it with inhabitants. Those who built Babel were indeed miraculously scattered and sent forth in different directions to form separate colonies and to found distinct nations. But the Greeks and Romans supplied, from their surplus population, colonies which in time became powerful people and independent states. Immense hordes of warlike robbers once issued from the densely-peopled regions of the North and, rolling like a mighty torrent, drove nations before them; while those whom they dislodged were forced to seek and to struggle for a home in some more distant region till

Europe was, as it is now, over-spread with population.

England, from its insular situation, is more liable to the inconvenience of over-population than a Continental country would perhaps be; but it is also, through Divine Mercy, supplied with an apparently inexhaustible outlet for the redundancy. Australia, with her immense resources, her boundless tracts of unoccupied land, her fertile soil, her genial climate, and her *gold*, enjoying the advantage of protection and guidance under the constitutional government of Great Britain, holds out alluring promise of success and satisfaction to those who are *compelled* to seek an improvement of their condition far from the home of their nativity. Emigration is in most cases *compulsory*. No one of acute feeling and sound judgment would voluntarily leave without a good hope of seeing again his native land, especially when that land is Britain.

But a necessity sometimes arises: and, where it does, the fond father will sacrifice

his own attachment to the soil that is endeared to him by early associations, the companions of his childhood, and the friends of his riper years, for the sake of his children's welfare. The younger members of a family will not suffer so acutely as the head of it. Youth is fond of change and susceptible of new impressions. They will soon become satisfied with their situation, and will in due time be rooted in the soil to which they have been transplanted.

To the Emigrants of riper years there will be the consolation that they are making a sacrifice for the good of those who are dependent upon them, and that they are performing a duty though a painful one. To the young then will be unfolded more and more the encouraging prospect of an ample reward for their industry, prudence, and perseverance.

EUGENIUS, contrary to his friend, possessed an extraordinary quickness of perception and brilliancy of imagination; but the facility with

which, in the first instance, he learned his stated task, made him unwilling still to con it over with that unwearied diligence which alone can render the acquisition permanent. Too lively and animated ever to be actually idle, he was constantly engaged in some pursuit, but wanted steadiness to persevere and make himself master of one science before he proceeded to another, and often before he could be said to have gained even a superficial view of that which he had abandoned. Conscious that a slight degree of attention would enable him to command the applause of his tutor when he came to construe his classics or solve his problems, and even to bear away the palm of superiority from his friend EUPHRONIUS, in despite of his close and constant application, the time allotted to study was too often consumed in frivolous amusement, or in forming some plan of future distinction. When the allowed period was nearly expired, he would start as from a morning dream and surprised that he had now

so little time for preparation, and reluctantly employed even that little in close attention to make up for the much that was lost for ever; but oftener the baleful plague of delay had usurped such a sway that he was almost unable to expel or overcome it, and on these occasions it was found easier to have recourse to the fruit of his friend's labour, whose good nature he was sure, though it might induce him to remonstrate, would not allow him to refuse.

Having given the last English Exercise of EUPHRONIUS under his private tutor, we here insert the last Exercise of EUGENIUS before leaving home for College:—

ON THE DEFINITION OF A GENTLEMAN.

I have long puzzled and perplexed my brains—have made many enquiries, have given offence to some and have received reproof from others, and all to no purpose—to discover some tolerably intelligible definition for a term very general in its use and so extensive in its application as—GENTLEMAN.

I dare say the aspirants after fashion bestow this distinction very sparingly, and do not admit the claim of any individual to this title except those who are strictly within the *pale* of their own society.

It is said that the ancient Greeks called all the world barbarians except themselves and the Romans. I suspect that there exists at the present day, in the wide world of fashion, a similar nicety in the arrangement of ranks. Thus, perhaps those at the top of the ladder of fortune look down on all below them as born only for the purpose of contributing in their respective capacities to the pleasure and entertainment of their superiors, as they modestly vote themselves to be; while those holding central situations on the ladder admit an equality with themselves to those above them, but set down the rest of mankind as *mere men.* And yet, were it to be communicated to the thousands so circumstanced that more than half the world considered them *not gentlemen,* their united indignation would

form as furious a subject for a long Epic poem as did the destructive rage of Achilles in ancient days.

But surely a word in such general use must have some meaning if we could only get at it. In what does it consist? What is it that constitutes an unquestionable claim to it? Let us try an Aristotlean definition—the genus of essential difference.

But first let me object generally to this definition; and I shall endeavour to prove that my objection is well-founded by shewing that one which has been accounted the best and most perfect is, as logicians express themselves, inadequate in both instances. First, it is not applicable to all the species intended to be defined; secondly, it is applicable to several of the individuals of several other species.

MAN is a rational animal. I grant that he is an animal; but is he always rational? Does he not on many occasions act as if reason were not at all one of his component

parts? But you will perhaps answer, "An exception only strengthens the truth of a general assertion." Granted, I say; but then it must be rare in its occurrence or it ceases to be an exception. And again, I ask you, Is man even often rational? It is at best a matter of doubt, and if I say that he is not I shall have as many to join me in my opinion as you can muster on your side if you prepare to oppose me.

In support of my second objection, do we not often meet amongst other animals, as dogs, elephants, and horses, such instances of rationality and good sense as, were he not so completely blinded as he is by vanity and self-conceit, ought to put man quite out of countenance and cause him

"To hide his diminished head?"

This, you will say, is in them an effect of reason. I never yet met with any other animals which spoke a language in which I could interrogate them, and from which I could learn what was passing in their minds.

I do not know therefore whether the association of ideas proceeds in a regular train, or whether they jump from cause to effect; but this I will declare that in them I have perceived conduct which appeared to me perfectly rational — reasonable. To say nothing of what they *do*, of the several examples which might easily be adduced of their obedience, docility, good temper, and good sense, let us for a moment consider *what they do not do.* They are never guilty of such excess as prevents their performing their respective duties, with perhaps the simple exception of a cow in a clover field eating till she bursts. But how is it with man—reasonable man? Do we not daily encounter the glutton who has become apoplectic from devouring much more rich soups and high seasoned meats than was necessary? Do we not momentarily meet with the drunkard who, during his intemperate debauch has entirely deprived himself of reason, if he ever possessed it, and is now either insane or frantic, or, sunk in

stupidity beneath the lowest of the brute creation, has

"Steeped his senses in forgetfulness?"

They do not, like man, find their highest gratification in the destruction of their fellows; they do *not* waste their time, their constitution, or their character in long nights spent at the gaming-table indulging in unprincipled speculation, where they seek incessantly certain ultimate ruin for themselves and pant unfeelingly for the money or estate of their friend! Should the scheme succeed, the friend must either be consigned to silent poverty, with no reward but repentance, or be driven to commit suicide. They do not seek to entrap the mind by subtle argument; they do not promise what they know can never be performed; they do not uncharitably condemn one another; they do not assemble for the purpose of calumny and detraction; they do not seek to destroy the affections of friends; they cannot justly be taxed with the mons-

trous enormities here enumerated, but

> "Man, vain man,
> Dress'd in a little brief authority,
> Plays such fantastic tricks before high heaven
> As make the angels weep."

Let us now return from this digression to the subject with which we first started, and endeavour to give an *Aristoteïian* definition of the word "Gentleman." A Gentleman is a man: thus far is plain sailing. But what is the essential distinction which distinguishes him from other men? Does it consist in high birth and a long line of ancestry? Oh, no! for how many enjoying all this and possessed beside of ample fortune to back these pretensions do, by disgraceful acts and dishonourable artifices, so sully the fair fame of their buried ancestors that they must be, and justly are, even by the very rabble which they affect to despise, held in contempt and treated as scoundrels. I know it has been said,

> "Without high birth no man can be
> A Gentleman indeed;
> Yet some there are of highest blood
> Appear of lowest breed!"

And a very old poetaster says,

> "If tow be woven in a silken gear
> In spite of all its coarseness will appear."

In part these remarks may be true, for at times even amongst the bad of well-bred men traits of nobleness of mind will break forth and cause them to shine even amidst boon-companions. For the truth of this assertion I appeal to any educated person who knows something of men and manners. On the other hand take a man of the most undeniable rank who is also endowed with every virtue that can adorn and do honour to humanity; let him be but poor and he too like the

> "Stricken-deer"

will find himself shunned and driven away by the rest of the herd.

Will riches alone render the claim indisputable? Certainly not. I appeal to any one in high-ton whether he would feel quite comfortable placed between a corpulent alderman and his larger lady; would he con-

sider them in private fit society for him, though they might be able to purchase, as far as money goes, his whole ancestry ten times over? Then neither birth or riches or learning will do singly: these must indisputably be united. Still good-breeding, elegance, and several other nameless requisites will be wanting. Add to all, supposing for a moment such a thing possible; even then envy and malice, aided by scandal, will be ever ready to come forward with some false unfounded tale to rob the victor of his prize even when he has best deserved it. I should have attempted a description by enumerating all the component parts were it not that the task would be a needless one; and that, on commencing my catalogue with qualities collected from the personages whom I had heard honoured with that appellation, I found that several of the parts would have been so very contradictory as to give the whole an air of extreme absurdity. Can it be possible that any of the materials which are used in the

formation of a man working at any ordinary trade enter at all into the composition of a peer of Great Britain? For as I was one evening walking near a neat looking public-house by the road-side, musing on this enquiry, I heard behind a shrill clear voice vociferating something to this effect: "Gentlemen, your tea has been waiting for you some time." On looking round to see who those gentlemen were, what was my astonishment when I found, on enquiry, they were two journeymen who, judging from their appearance, could hardly have been more than just out of their apprenticeship. This at once gave a fatal blow to my original plan and disconcerted all my previous speculations on the definition of a Gentleman.

A great difference between the characters of these two youths will be perceived: EUPHRONIUS, like the industrious bee, sought the sweets of no flower from which he was not likely to extract honey, nor left any till he had fully possessed himself of its hoarded

sweets; EUGENIUS, like the gay and thoughtless butterfly, skimmed over all the beauties of the garden and the field, dipped lightly into each, but procured from none a lasting advantage nor made any provision for a future day. They possessed in common the noblest principles of honour, the most refined sensibility of heart, and the finest feelings of humanity. They entertained for each other an enthusiastic regard and unbounded affection: EUPHRONIUS loved his friend though he could not occasionally help pitying him; while EUGENIUS felt for EUPHRONIUS that regard and esteem which could be lessened or affected by no secondary consideration.

In due time they each obtained a degree at the University: EUGENIUS with *éclat*, for here too he had *occasional starts* of study which were invariably rewarded with more applause than indeed they merited; but EUPHRONIUS with advantage, for he let slip no opportunity and spared no exertion by which he might acquire solid and valuable information. Both

were then intended for the Law,---of all others the most laborious and in which, though shining abilities may certainly assist, yet indefatigable assiduity can alone hope to succeed.

Released now from the control of tutors and freed from academical thraldom EUGENIUS was more than ever the slave of idleness and inconstancy. He daily flattered himself that if he did waste and misspend some time now he could easily repair the deficiency by double diligence at some future period; but he did not take into consideration that idleness, once indulged, will every day gain ground, till at last its pernicious influence becomes, perhaps, too deeply rooted to be ever eradicated. EUPHRONIUS in the interim, impressed with a deep sense of the great value of time, pursued a steady unaltered course, and a circumstance which occurred soon after he left the University increased his exertion and made him, if possible, to redouble his efforts. He became enamoured of a young

lady who possessed every requisite which could ensure his happiness in the matrimonial state; but, as she had no fortune and the narrowness of his father's income would not admit of his making any settlement on his son during his own life, their immediate union was impossible. EUPHRONIUS therefore proceeded with unceasing zeal, and looked forward with rational hope to the moment when he should receive as the recompense of his toil a sufficiency to support with credit a wife and family. He was not disappointed; he was at last happy: while the talented EUGENIUS still continued at the same point from which he had at first started. Often did he lay down a regular course of study, and determined that nothing should induce him to swerve from the plan which he proposed; but, sometimes before he had commenced, and always before he was firmly established in his intended habits, some party of pleasure or fascinating proposal of fashion enticed him to postpone his purpose for a short time,

resolving within himself, by adding to the strictness of his original intention, to atone for its delay: but, like the heads of the Hydra, one amusement was the forerunner of another, and he so frequently deviated from the path which led to his return that the track was at last entirely lost and the design of diligence totally abandoned. Yet, in the midst of so much apparent pleasure, he was far from the enjoyment of any solid gratification; he was dissatisfied with himself, and therefore reflection was intolerable. In crowds he sought satisfaction but found satiety; at home he sighed for relief but suffered remorse.

While EUGENIUS was thus conscious that he was acting wrong, yet wanted resolution to alter his conduct, he paid a long-promised visit to his friend EUPHRONIUS and beheld at his house complete happiness, the result of constant employment. EUPHRONIUS always rose early in the morning and devoted a considerable part of it to the perusal and investi-

gation of the briefs on which he had, in the course of the day, to dispute and dilate before numbers of his applauding countrymen. With what delight, on his return in the evening, did he present to a wife whom he adored the well-earned meed of industry and assiduity. With what pleasure did she, when he again retired to his study (as he invariably did for a few hours in the evening) read, during his absence, in the public prints, his erudite speeches; with what a rapturous glow did she observe the force and perspicuity which shone through every period of his polished language; and with what transport did she reflect that the author of these was *her own.* EUGENIUS, when he witnessed happiness which, but for his own neglect, might have been his, once more determined, with a sigh, to lose no more time but to take the earliest opportunity of endeavouring to become like his friend EUPHRONIUS.

During his visit he became acquainted with a gentleman who had amassed a considerable

fortune by mercantile speculations, and who, though possessed of sufficient property to support him in affluence and splendour, yet, from an infatuation not very uncommon though often ruinous, now kept nearly the whole of his capital afloat. In other respects he was a man of sound sense, who enjoyed the advantages of a good education, an intimate knowledge of the world, and an extraordinary insight into human character. MERCATOR (for so we shall call this gentleman) almost at a single glance penetrated into the inmost recesses of EUGENIUS's character, and having carefully weighed what was estimable in it against what was objectionable, he found the balance to preponderate so much in favour of the former that he determined to try if he could not effect a total reformation by holding forth some motive sufficiently strong to wean him from his present folly, and resolved to trust to time for the discovery of the means; for EUGENIUS really possessed noble qualities,

while all his faults and misfortunes arose from idleness and inconstancy, the consequence of having originally placed too much confidence in his own talent, a powerful agent when assisted by application, but weak and worthless when unsupported by it, and which, at last, became a habit too strongly confirmed to be easily conquered.

MERCATOR, in the first place, invited him to spend some time with him at his own house; and there, being like most other young men liable to impressions of the tender kind, he became enamoured of his only daughter, which MERCATOR no sooner perceived than he offered him his child with a fortune of ten thousand pounds whenever the professional exertions of EUGENIUS should, for two consecutive years, have procured him an income of two hundred pounds, provided that she were willing to acquiesce in the agreement. "For," said he, "though a man possess the riches of India, unless he has something entirely independent of the caprice

of fortune he, in fact, has nothing which he can properly call his own." The young lady, on being consulted, confessed that she felt a partiality for EUGENIUS, but, at the same time, acknowledged the force of her father's reasoning and submitted entirely to his proposal. EUGENIUS had thus for the first time in his life, an immediate motive for exertion; he therefore formed his plans with more judgment and executed them with more firmness than he had ever before done. He now resided altogether with his friend; he was provided with a room in a remote and quiet part of the house and furnished with every convenience for study. MERCATOR even ceased to see any company, fearing to introduce the most trifling temptation or run the least risk of obscuring the ray of diligence which had but just darted forth. The conduct of EUGENIUS for several months gave his anxious friend every reason to believe that he should, at last, be able to congratulate himself on having presented his

country with an able and useful citizen : and the time approached in which it was to be put to the proof.

At the ensuing term he was to proceed to the capital, there to commence the arduous practice of the Law and strive to acquire, by his own exertions, that income which was to be followed by the possession of a lovely and amiable woman, to whom he was really more attached than he himself was aware. On the morning of his departure warm and urgent were the entreaties and exhortations which MERCATOR advanced while he advised and besought him to persevere and prevail; tender and affectionate were the warnings of his daughter, while enthusiastic and at the same time sincere were the promises of compliance which EUGENIUS made to both. Several times did they embrace, weep, and part ; then would they return to the mournful indulgence of one more adieu, intending that each should be the last, till EUGENIUS, summoning all the fortitude that he could com-

mand, absolutely forced himself into the carriage which waited at the door, and as it drove rapidly away, buried in a corner, he seemed unwilling that any unhallowed eye should profane the sacred retirement of grief. As each object faded from his view he felt, like the separation of soul and body, that necessity which tore him from those beings whom in all the world he loved the best, and from that spot where he had spent the happiest moments of his life.

It is ever vain to check the rapid course of grief: like the mountain torrent when its stream is swollen, its impetuosity is but increased by opposition, but, meeting with an open channel, it soon exhausts itself by its own violence. As EUGENIUS had no one with him to undertake the task, he soon recovered sufficient serenity of temper to think calmly and to comfort himself with the reflection that the last months of his life had been spent well; that during that time he had not only gained the good opinion of

MERCATOR and his lovely daughter, but had also reconciled his *self-esteem,* and that in all probability he would soon be entitled to claim that reward the remote prospect of which had alone urged him to so much exertion. He regarded the past with unmingled satisfaction; he looked to the future with sanguine hopes, and therefore enjoyed from the present a keener relish than he had ever before experienced. So pleased had MERCATOR been with the improvement which had taken place that he determined, in despite of the pain which parting occasioned, to suffer EUGENIUS to go alone, and if his reformation continued unshaken and stood the test of temptation which is in a large metropolis held forth in so many ways to the unwary, he resolved no longer to delay his happiness but to solemnnize the wished-for marriage on his return from town.

There existed now no barrier to the complete happiness of EUGENIUS except his possible failure during the short time of trial.

His father had often without effect endeavoured to recall him to his duty by setting before him the excellent example of EUPHRONIUS, by showing him that the pleasures which he pursued were in themselves unfit to satisfy an immortal soul, and, lastly, by begging him with tears and entreaties to become steady and settled, unless he wished to behold the grey hairs of an affectionate father descend with sorrow to the grave. At those moments the feeling heart of EUGENIUS would almost melt with anguish for the cureless wounds which he had been daily inflicting on a fond parent. Then would he resolve on amendment. But alas! weakness and irresolution, the melancholy result of *idleness indulged,* were still an insuperable obstacle to his reform; and at last the poor old gentleman, hopeless and despairing, ceased to seek consolation or expect comfort: he waited sad and silent till death, the surest friend of misfortune, should end together his earthly being and his woes. His garden grew wild and the

plants of his greenhouse withered; his own well-trimmed lawn grew dank and uneven, and his neglected ponds became green and stagnant; he now never visited the father of EUPHRONIUS, because the trimness of his garden, the verdure of his lawn, and the freshness of his ponds would but remind him of the desolation which reigned at home; he now never saw him, because his presence would but have recalled to his recollection that the offspring of both were once the children of hope,— his friend's most excellent views had been realized, while his, alas, were frustrated and blasted! But as from the black and lowering clouds which threaten a summer storm the glowing sun will sometimes burst forth bright and burning, so was the gloom which had bowed him to the earth dispelled and illumined by the joyful tidings that his darling son had really repented and reformed. With what delight did the good old man forgive the past and once more erect the visionary fabric of future bliss; with what

tremulous anxiety did all his friends await the event of that ordeal which was for ever to fix EUGENIUS in their esteem or once more to plunge them in grief and disappointment, rendered more bitter by the hope which had been excited. As EUGENIUS thought it safer to avoid temptation in the first instance than to encounter the hazard of being able to resist it when it had arrived, he formed the resolution of visiting none of his old acquaintance and entering into no kind of gaiety; and for some time steadily adhered to his resolution.

By the interest of EUPHRONIUS, who had now become known and established, and who was more gratified by the change which he witnessed in his friend than he could have been by any accession of fortune which had happened to himself, he obtained (for a young practitioner in the forensic struggle) a considerable quantity of business, which he managed with so much credit to himself and satisfaction to his clients, that he was enabled to send the most promising accounts to his

father and to MERCATOR. His correspondence with them was frequent and affectionate, and everything seemed to hold out the most enlivening hope of a happy termination to his term of probation.

EUGENIUS now too began to think himself secure and to imagine that he was impregnable to any attack of his ancient enemy. But, alas! we are never so weak as when we confide in our own strength! As EUGENIUS was one evening returning from the courts, buried in some dream of future felicity, a smart tap on the shoulder made him turn suddenly round, when immediately an extended hand seizes his with so much apparent cordiality that surprise for a moment suspended his faculties of discrimination, and the stranger had already linked himself to his arm, and was in a voluble strain pouring forth

"An indefinite deal of nothing,"

before he recognised in him a person whom he ought of all others to have avoided.

PRODIGUS had commenced life with every advantage that could induce to render him a useful and an illustrious member of the commonwealth, and was now likely to end it overwhelmed with every vice and folly which can degrade and debase human nature. He possessed, by inheritance, an ample fortune, but his mother having unfortunately died almost as soon as he was born, and his father when he was yet but ten years of age, he was left entirely to the care of guardians, who thought they had performed every duty connected with the important occupation which they had undertaken, when their only anxiety had been to ascertain that he had spent a certain number of years at Eton, afterwards at the University, and, finally, that he had been duly introduced into the first society; but they enquired not whether he had learned at school, whether he had been diligent at the University, nor whether he took any pleasure in the society of worthy men. Thus, plunged into the world untaught and unprotected, it is

no wonder that he became the easy victim of every temptation, the undaunted violator of every mandate which virtue has enrolled as sacred, and proud in the commission of every vice which a corrupt age has screened behind the sanction of fashion. He possessed bright parts, but these being obscured and useless from the enervating power of sloth, or, wrested and warped from their great original design, became the shameless engines of seduction and ruin. For a young man, whose principles were not immutably fixed, there could not have been a more dangerous companion; deeply sunk in vice and licentiousness, he no longer struggled to extricate himself, but now become a voluntary advocate for the Prince of Darkness, he prostituted his exalted talents to the fiend-like purpose of immerging others into the same gulf of destruction which yawned for himself. He was in every way fitted for task: a handsome figure and a manly expressive countenance never fail to prepossess the beholder in favour

of him who possesses them; we feel that we should be displeased and disappointed by discovering that any thing corrupt inhabited so fair a temple, and what we ardently wish we are easily induced to believe. A polite and elegant address, acquired by constant intercourse with that society where the *surface* is always polished, but the *interior* too often cankered and unsound; a seeming sacrifice of his own indulgences to the comfort of every one else, and an undeviating observance of what the world calls good-breeding, confirmed in a transient spectator the opinion which he at first formed of PRODIGUS.

Such was the person who now expressed pleasure ineffable and transport unbounded at again meeting with EUGENIUS, whom he had so long missed from the crowded haunts of dissipation and folly, and who almost immediately proposed that he should, that evening, make one of a party who were going to witness the performance of a celebrated

actor. EUGENIUS, fearing the fascination to which he had before fallen a sacrifice, politely declined the invitation, and when it was pressed so warmly that he could not well avoid giving some reason for his refusal, he unfolded the story of his reformation and depicted the pleasure it had procured him with so much feeling and sensibility, that even the arch-fiend himself would have been deterred from reducing to ruin the goodly fabric which virtue had reared; but PRODIGUS, the confirmed votary of vice, had long since stifled in his flinty bosom the minutest spark of that tender consideration for another by the exercise of which man most resembles his Maker. He knew that openly and directly to oppose EUGENIUS would be to put him on his guard, and inevitably to defeat his own purpose; he therefore proceeded in another way. He congratulated him on his wise determination and acquiesced generally on the truth of his deductions, but remarked that it was absolutely necessary to soften the

rigour of discipline by some little relaxation; that the human mind, like an Indian bow, required to be occasionally unbent, as from constant tension it was apt to become unnerved and forceless. He then artfully observed that the stage gives true representation of character; that the beauty of virtue and deformity of vice are there painted in such strong and glowing colours that, with the contrast presented so palpably to our view, we cannot fail to be enamoured of the former and disgusted with the latter. There was no confuting what he asserted, and he prevailed over the scruples of EUGENIUS. Had he merely gone to the theatre and afterwards returned quietly home no harm would have arisen; but he went with those who were depraved and dissolute to the last degree and no good could be expected to follow. When the play was over it was proposed that they should adjourn to a neighbouring restaurant and sup. To this EUGENIUS objected; but the party of PRODIGUS being now reinforced,

and being all equally abandoned and immoral, they, in a body, overruled his intended desertion and bore him away with shouts of triumph.

EUGENIUS had now stepped in too far to recede, at least for that night, and therefore, contenting himself with a resolution to return no more, he entered for the present into all the frantic gaiety of his thoughtless companions, and the glorious source of light was far advanced before they thought of returning to their respective homes. The next day was entirely lost to EUGENIUS; for, unused to dissipation, it made him so weak and nervous that he was compelled to remain in bed the greater part of the afternoon. Scarcely had he risen from a feverish slumber when he was assailed by the partners of his last night's revelry, who affected to feel the deepest regret at his indisposition and recommended a walk as the best means of removing it. This seemed to him so very harmless that he thought it would have been unkind to have

refused, and accordingly they all started together. During the walk he was invited to dine with them, which he at first faintly refused, but, on its being pressed, no longer withheld his compliance.

Now was he lost indeed! It is difficult for any one, when hastily advanced to the edge of a precipice, to stop his career, yet a vigorous effort will then sometimes effect it; but one more step and the hapless victim must be hurried down the destructive steep. Already had EUGENIUS taken that irrevocable step. After having for some days entirely neglected his duties he feared to encounter his clients, and they ceased to seek after him: he felt that he was now fallen, and in order to banish reflection his new companions were daily resorted to, and their intoxicating pleasures were nightly repeated.

To MERCATOR and his daughter he had now nothing pleasant to communicate, and his letters to them became at first colder and more languid, then shorter and less frequent,

and were at last entirely neglected. They both remarked with pain his evident estrangement yet, as much as was possible, sought to conceal from each other their mutual affliction; they wished to deceive themselves and to think that he was not so culpable as he appeared to be. But, alas! it was too plain that he was lost to them and to himself. MERCATOR now formed the design of proceeding to town and ascertaining the real cause of this unmerited coldness and neglect, when he unexpectedly received a packet of letters, one of which contained the entire account of EUGENIUS's defection and another brought the intelligence of a misfortune which nearly touched his child and himself, and compelled him altogether to alter his original plan. In consequence of one or two heavy losses at sea, and the failure of the bankers with whom he transacted business, and in whose hands he had at this time a considerable sum, he was in one minute reduced from affluence to beggary. It was a

dreadful shock; yet both he and his daughter summoned their utmost fortitude to support it, that by so doing they might be the better able to assist and comfort one another. To fill up the bitter cup of misery, he was now informed that the father of EUGENIUS, having heard suddenly and accidentally that his son had relapsed into greater than his former faults, surprise and disappointment threw him into an apoplectic fit, from which he had been with the greatest difficulty recovered, and still continued ill and enfeebled. But neither his own misfortunes nor the ingratitude which he had experienced could entirely eradicate in the breast of MERCATOR the affection which he felt for EUGENIUS; he therefore resolved to make one more attempt at his recovery.

When EUGENIUS rose late one day, enervated and unwell from the effects of the last night's intemperance, he found on his breakfast table two letters,—one directed in the well-known writing of MERCATOR and the

other in a strange hand. With trembling apprehension and conscious guilt he broke first the seal of his friend's letter and read as follows :—

"The time has been when, in distress, you "had been the first friend to whom I would "have hastened for comfort and consolation ; "but now, engaged in gaiety and involved in "amusement, it is not to be expected that "you should dedicate even a moment to the "unfortunate. You must have heard ere "this that my daughter and myself are penny-"less ; nor should I now trouble you with the "repetition of a tale to which, from the recol-"lection of the brighter days we have all "passed together, you may perhaps pay the "passing tribute of a short-lived sigh, were "it not that duty demands it and justice "makes the claim imperative. I know there "is something in your nature which will not "allow you to forget that you were once en-"gaged to, and pretended affection for, my

"daughter. I fear that a bitter pang, which
"not even the loud laugh of revelry can sup-
"press, may sometimes rend the fibres of
"your heart, not yet, I trust, wholly callous
"to the feelings of sensibility, when the
"image obtrudes itself on your imagination
"of that gratified smile with which the now
"heart-broken MERCATOR presented to you
"his choicest treasure, while you promised in
"return to prove yourself worthy of the
"prize. With what enthusiastic transport
"did you seem to gaze on that heightened
"glow which alone proclaimed the pleasure
"that your vows bestowed on my child.
"Alas! that bloom is changed to ashy pale-
"ness. The loss of fortune we could both
"have borne, for that may be repaired; but
"EUGENIUS has been to *her* untrue—to *me*
"unkind—and that contains the sum of all
"misery. The rebukes of the aged are
"seldom respected by the gay and dissolute.
"I did not intend to have reproached you,
"but grief is garrulous, and this is the last

"time you shall ever be troubled by one who
"would have been your friend but could not;
"you have banished me from your confidence
"and admitted others: may they execute the
"task of contributing to your happiness as I
"had untertaken it disinterestedly and sin-
"cerely. I wish not unnecessarily to afflict
"you, but the work I have begun I must go
"through with. Your poor father has been
"seized with apoplexy, occasioned by the
"disappointment of his hopes in you, and
"with difficulty saved from death. You may
"consider yourself released from every tie
"which bound you to my daughter; the link
"of affection is severed and snapt asunder.
"Why then should the useless chain be left
"to gall you with its weight? That you may
"soon discover that you have mistaken the
"path to happiness, and may speedily turn
"into the track of morality and virtue, which
"alone lead to its temple, shall ever be my
"anxious prayer; and my daughter, while a
"hectic glow flashed for a moment over her

"pallid cheek, and the glassy tear trembled
"in her brightened eye, has declared that, in
"her dying hour, which is I fear not far re-
"moved, and in which the souls of mortals
"hold closest communion with eternity, she
"will beg of Heaven, as the last blessing it can
"bestow on earth, to send some strengthening
"minister to save and to assist you!

"MERCATOR."

Trembling, like an aspen leaf, and perceiving the same post-mark, he then read the other epistle:—

"DEAR SIR,—I am very sure that the
"tidings which I have to communicate will
"be quite as painful to you to read as they
"are for me to write. Of late Miss ——'s
"health has perceptibly declined, her frame
"has wasted away, and she who was (as you
"know) always cheerful, never smiles and
"scarcely speaks.

"This marked alteration was a source of
"deep anguish to her father, but she avoided

"explanation until now, when, upon *my*
"pressing the question home, as only a medi-
"cal man can do and under such circum-
"stances ought to do, with friendly earnest-
"ness she replied EUGENIUS's last letters to
"me were unaccountably cool, and 'now he
"'never writes to me at all.' I am persuaded
"that this inference on her part is the hasty
"conclusion of her affectionate heart. It
"may be that she makes too much of you;
"but this *you* will easily forgive. I do not
"desire either to distress or to alarm you
"by this account of the young lady's de-
"clining state, but feeling certain that a kind
"word from you will do more to restore her
"than any regimen or recipe whatever, and
"equally so that you will share *their sorrow*
"and sympathise in *their grief*, and eagerly
"hasten to relieve their desolation by re-
"moving the cause and restoring peace to a
"faithful heart that beats fondly for you.
"Not a soul knows of this letter but the
"writer and yourself.

"I remain, in expectation of attention that "cannot, after all, travel as rapidly as your "feelings will,

"Dear sir, yours sincerely,

"MEDICUS."

EUGENIUS stood but a moment in the contemplation of the pain which he had occasioned his friends and the remorse which he had heaped upon himself. How earnestly did he now wish that the time were again to go over, that he might, by pursuing a different course of conduct, save them from the cares which corroded their quiet and himself from the pangs which lacerated his bosom. But time will neither retard its progress to supply the deficiences and satisfy the desires of weak mortals, nor, when once passed, can it be recalled to rectify their cares and remove its ravages. By dwelling with regret on our misconduct, when it is now irrevocable, we too often neglect the opportunity which the present affords of repairing what is past and

laying the foundation of better plans for the future. But for once the better angel of EUGENIUS prevailed; and he now adopted the only conduct which could avert the lamentable ruin that impended. Though engaged on that afternoon to join a gay and fashionable party in an excursion to the country, and expected in the evening at a brilliant assembly, the real worthlessness of those who had lately professed friendship for him, and had so long allured him from the pleasing paths of rectitude and virtue, flashed upon him so forcibly that he resolved to withdraw himself for ever from a connection so dangerous and so destructive. He was soon prepared to set out for the residence of MERCATOR, determined, by every submission and entreaty which it was in his power to offer, to effect a total reconciliation with him and his daughter, and then to engage their intercession with his injured father. Never till this moment did he feel in its full force the extent of his affection for her who was once his betrothed

bride; and now that it was uncertain whether she could ever be induced to pardon desertion so unmerited, and once more to look upon him with that tender approbation which had lately been his chief delight, the value of that blessing which, from uninterrupted enjoyment, had before been disregarded, was viewed in its real magnitude. He thought each moment an age that delayed him from the presence of those whose absence was rendered particularly painful by the consciousness of their displeasure.

His carpet-bag at length being ready, EUGENIUS was about to come down stairs when PRODIGUS appeared, and surprised at the coolness of his reception eagerly enquired the cause. "I have," replied EUGENIUS, "little "time now for explanation: suffice it to say "that the pernicious example and artful al- "lurements of yourself and your companions, "in drawing me from study and sobriety, of "which I had but just began to taste the "uncloying sweets, have plunged my best,

"my only, friends in misery and disappoint-
"ment, and overwhelmed myself with re-
"morse and shame. A vigorous effort now,
"and undeviating rectitude hereafter, may
"restore to me and them part of what we
"have lost. It now therefore becomes an
"imperative duty that I entirely avoid those
"who have lately been my constant com-
"panions unless, convinced of the erroneous-
"ness of the track in which we have all been
"treading, you also are induced to become
"good and virtuous ; and then with pleasure
"will I prove myself a true friend." "You
"cannot be serious," said PRODIGUS, in a
gay thoughtless tone, looking at himself in
the glass and adjusting his necktie. "I
"hope," replied EUGENIUS, with a deep sigh,
"that I am serious." "Oh ! if that be the
"case," rejoined PRODIGUS, "I am off. I
"can at any time have a better sermon from
"the parson ; but there are many yet to come
"before I repent, and as I have now no time
"to argue the subject I shall wish you a

"pleasant journey." So saying he ran down stairs with a loud laugh which, like the awful echo of a charnel-house, proclaimed the corrupted hollowness that dwelt therein. EUGENIUS made no reply, but, rushing into the conveyance that waited for him at the door, was soon on his way to the house of mourning.

Various were the emotions which assailed him before he reached the dwelling of his friend: at one time his happy fancy presented to him the golden days yet in store, when, surrounded with domestic blessings, the fruits of his industry should supply the old age of MERCATOR with every comfort, and his unerring rectitude shed an autumnal radiance over the tranquil evening of his father's life; at another his troubled imagination startled him with the petrifying picture of MERCATOR grieved for his apostacy, yet too deeply deceived again to place confidence in him; of his daughter, pale and emaciated, doomed by his unkindness to an untimely grave and

expiring as she pronounced his pardon; or of his own father, in the icy arms of death, the victim of disappointed hope and paternal frenzy.

Agitated and enervated by the strong conflict of hope and fear, his tottering limbs could scarcely support him when he arrived at the place from which he had departed, not so very long before, with such different presentiments. The window-shutters were all carefully closed; no playful cattle sported in the pasture contiguous to the lawn; no smiling domestic appeared to greet an approaching guest. The grass had begun already to grow up in the gravel walks, and the shrubs, which were planted on each side of the avenue in wild luxuriance, stretched their unpruned branches over the road, as though they said,

"Approach not, for here is the abode of sorrow."

The green-house plants, which had been placed in the front of the house to receive

the benefit of the vernal breezes, had been left and neglected; no fostering hand had nourished their parched and arid roots with moisture, nor sheltered their tender stalks from the scorching summer sun. They had perished! It was not always thus thought EUGENIUS: but he had no time to pursue the picture. The loud knocking of the coachman had at length brought to the entrance an old grey-headed domestic, the only one now left; he had been with MERCATOR in his youth and still pertinaciously clung to the wreck of his fortunes. When he saw that it was EUGENIUS, "Thank Heaven you "have come," said the old man; "there "have been sad doings since you left—but "you shall see." By this time they had reached that apartment which had formerly been the study of EUGENIUS: the rest had been stripped of all the splendid furniture which once adorned them, and it was now arranged for the purposes of sale in the hall, through which they had to pass. Each

individual article, as it caught his view, recalled to the memory of EUGENIUS a thousand tender associations: his utmost fortitude could scarcely support it. He buried his face in his handkerchief and hurried forward. The old man softly opened the door and then withdrew. EUGENIUS proceeded with the greatest caution, impressed with a religious fear of disturbing the melancholy silence which reigned around: MERCATOR and his daughter sat in a deep window with their backs turned towards him. It was now the ending of a fine summer-day; the sun had so lately descended below the horizon that his beams still continued to guild the distant mountain which excluded him from their view; the moon, in modest majesty, already rode high in heaven and her pale light, fit type of sorrow, had just gained that position in which it could be fully seen from the window where MERCATOR and his daughter were. As her eyes dwelt upon it, its mournful image seemed reflected on her face; she

was buried in thought, yet no smile nor sigh told whether her day-dream were the off-spring of hope or despondence. Her father's gaze was, to all appearance, fixed on vacancy; but at the very instant in which EUGENIUS remained irresolute whether to advance or not, the poor old gentleman was suddenly and deeply affected by an inadvertant glance which had rested on the night-desk at which EUGENIUS used to study, and which had been scrupulously allowed to occupy the exact situation in which he had left it. He then looked up to heaven as if conscious that comfort still was there: his eye met his daughter's; she immediately divined the cause of his emotion and, affectionately squeezing his hand, hastened to remove it: the old man turned half round to prevent her when they both, at the same moment, perceived that EUGENIUS was in the room.

Overcome by strong surprise she fainted, and EUGENIUS darted forward to support her. By the aid of proper restoratives she soon

recovered, and found herself in the arms of him who had, she thought, been lost to her for ever. Even MERCATOR was so pleased with his presence that he thought not of reproaching him with the past. My happiness, he reflected, might yet be complete were I convinced that he would even now return to virtue; my felicity might yet be permanent could I behold him steadily fixed in principles of rectitude and my daughter, by his means, again restored to that bloom of health which has been banished principally by his misconduct, for our own individual losses should never have effected either of us beyond a day; though impoverished I am still an honest man, and though my child be now portionless still does she inherit the valueless dower of virtue! Why then should we fear? It was only through the neglect of EUGENIUS that we were at all vulnerable. The shaft has flown; but as He who inflicted the wound possesses also the remedy, we are not destitute of hope: yet, while I endulge it, or

suffer my child to be deluded by its deceitful smile, I shall fully ascertain the foundation on which we rest. As soon therefore as the agitation occasioned by their abrupt meeting had a little subsided, he, in a low and faltering voice thus addressed EUGENIUS:—"I need "not say that we are glad to see you, that "must be evident to your own observation; "even during your late unkindness and cruel "desertion we always pitied and would at "any time have served you; we no longer "possess any inducement to attract the gay "sons of fashion, the only possessions we "can now boast of are rectitude and un-"blemished reputation; if those have still "any charms for you you are indeed most "welcome, but if you come merely because "you deem it a duty to visit us in misfortune, "it is only adding an unnecessary pang to "what we have already suffered by reminding "us how much we have lost. My daughter "has now no fortune, and from any tie which "may once have bound you to her we are

"both willing to release you. You have, I "trust, sincerity enough left to tell us candidly "what the real motive was which urged you "to come." "I do not," said EUGENIUS, "deserve your confidence; that which you "fearlessly reposed in me has been by me "faithlessly disappointed, yet, trust me, the "punishment attendant on the very commis-"sion of the fault has been sufficiently severe "to save me from again relapsing, could you "and your amiable daughter be prevailed "upon once more to restore me to your "favour. I came because I felt that I could "not exist under your displeasure, and be-"cause I am now convinced that virtue and "industry are both essential to happiness. "I once before enjoyed a foretaste of the "blessings they only can bestow, and now "return, like the repentant prodigal, to ac-"knowledge my error and to declare my "resolution of amendment." "And like the "repentant prodigal shall you be received, my "dearest boy," cried the delighted MER-

CATOR, heartily shaking his hand, and then placing it in his daughter's. She spoke not; but her returning the warm yet gentle pressure which he gave proved to EUGENIUS that she too had sealed his pardon. A moment more and he clasped her in his arms; their affliction was now forgotten and they felt once more perfectly happy.

The next day they went together to the father of EUGENIUS, whom they found out of danger but still very languid and low-spirited. When they came near his house MERCATOR advanced a little way before them and broke by degrees the arrival of EUGENIUS, and the happy change which had taken place in him. The latter intelligence was of greater advantage in promoting his recovery than all the remedies which medicinal skill had previously recommended: its effect too was instantaneous; for from the moment that he heard the good tidings the traces of his disease were hardly perceptible. In the course of the evening it was agreed upon that

EUGENIUS should immediately return to town, and by his conduct there should give proofs of the sincerity of his present promises, and also endeavour to regain the credit which he had of late lost amongst his brethren at the Bar, and those from whom he was to expect employment; and that they should all join him as soon as the affairs of MERCATOR could be put in a train for ascertaining whether he had anything left which he could call his own. His affairs however were found, upon examination, not so desperate as had been imagined, and one of his ships which was reported to have been lost having unexpectedly arrived in safety, there remained for himself, after paying all his creditors their whole demand, a considerable sum of money.

During the interval in which this investigation took place the most flattering accounts were received from EUGENIUS, and a letter from EUPHRONIUS confirmed them. He had, it stated, been often assailed by those companions who had before led him to his ruin,

but he continued steadily to resist every impulse to ill; and it concluded with observing that he might be considered as established in the principles which he professed.

MERCATOR and his daughter with delight now joined him in town, and with inexpressible pleasure found him occupied amid the ponderous folios of legal information. They took neat and retired lodgings together, and EUGENIUS went on daily advancing in reputation and respectability till his labours were crowned with the possession of a loving and affectionate wife. He was, at last, able to supply MERCATOR with those comforts to which he had been so long used that they had become necessaries, and of which he had been for some time deprived by the narrowness of his circumstances. On his father he was no longer compelled to draw for any assistance; and that good old man, having lived to behold the completion of his utmost wishes, had now ample time to turn all his thoughts to that eternal, blessed home

towards which he hastened. EUGENIUS, in the meantime, continued respected by all good men, beloved by his father, esteemed and applauded by his friends MERCATOR and EUPHRONIUS, and adored by the wife of his bosom.

His success was so far from creating self-confidence that, the farther he advanced in the good opinion of the world, the stricter guard did he keep over his conduct; and, shuddering at the recollection of what he had suffered from idleness and imprudence, he never failed to hold himself forth to all the young people of his acquaintance as an unanswerable example that honour and industry, morality and piety, can alone lead us to that portion of happiness which we are capable of in this sublunary sphere, and unerringly secure our succession to an eternity of bliss in that celestial Paradise which is to come.

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